

By the way, if you are watching the news, you know there is a lot going on over Alaska right now. But I just want to say a word about our military, Active-Duty, National Guard, and Reserve Forces. Think about what our guys and women have done the last 2 weeks: tracked and intercepted this big Russian spy balloon, tracked and intercepted at least two of these smaller unidentified objects and shot two of them down—the one over Alaska. The one in Canada, those were shot down by Alaskan forces in Canada. Then, in the last 4 nights, these same forces have gone and intercepted two different Russian “Bear” bombers and fighters—Russian fighters who were trying to get into our airspace. This is in 2 weeks. These are not easy missions. They are very difficult, challenging, missions.

Do you know what else wasn’t an easy mission? Storming the beaches of Normandy. Storming the beaches of Normandy.

I have a little picture here. That is why I want to get to our Alaskan of the Week, a very special, very patriotic Alaskan, a World War II veteran, Mr. R.C. Roberts.

I can think of no better way to cap off Black History Month than to recognize Mr. Roberts, his service to our country, and help him and his family celebrate his 100th birthday.

How about a round of applause, America, for Mr. Roberts’ 100th birthday, a Normandy, D-Day, Omaha Beach veteran. He celebrated that on Tuesday, Valentine’s Day, 100 years old.

So who is Mr. Roberts?

Let’s hear a little bit about the life that he has lived in full. Like I said, that is him. That is him, our Alaskan of the Week, on the poster board. He was a handsome young man, saving the world, literally.

He was originally born in Garrison, TX, in 1923. Imagine that, 100 years ago. According to letters written by friends, he worked on a family farm, left school early in life, and joined the Army when he was just 18, shortly at the start of World War II. He wanted to go fight for his country, and he did fight.

Many Americans have seen movies about D-Day. Again, here is a photo—our brave soldiers, hitting the beaches at Normandy, facing unbelievable heavy fire, having to navigate mined obstacles on the beach, mines on the bluffs, Germans dug in with machine-guns.

You have seen in the beginning—I am sure many of you have—“Saving Private Ryan,” the seawalls to climb. That is what he did. That is what he did for America, for freedom. It was the largest, most complex combined airborne-amphibious military invasion in world history. Mr. Roberts, our Alaskan of the Week, was there on Omaha Beach in 1944.

He eventually marched all the way into Germany with the U.S. Army, all the way across Europe. He was part of the heroic mission that saved the world. That is not an exaggeration.

Mr. Roberts served 3 years. He was awarded the European Campaign Medal with three Bronze Stars, representing three difficult battles across Europe that he fought in. And here is the thing, you have to remember this. It was 1944. Our military was fully segregated, and Black soldiers were discriminated against. In fact, it took until 1948 for President Harry Truman to order the Armed Forces to be integrated, 16 years before the passage of the Civil Rights Act. But this patriot, despite the discrimination, was fighting for America.

How did Mr. Roberts make it through these ordeals—incredible ordeals—of fire?

Prayer, he said. He said:

Every day, I prayed, and [when I got home] I was so grateful to be back in the United States.

When he got out of the military and made his way back to Texas and then to California, he had a friend who was in Alaska who told him that his skills were needed up in the great State of Alaska.

It was 1964. Our State had just been devastated by the largest earthquake ever recorded in North America. It was the second-largest earthquake ever recorded in the history of the world—9.2 on the Richter scale—our Good Friday earthquake in 1964. Tsunamis crushed buildings, and of course it killed a lot of people. There was a lot of rebuilding being done. So Mr. Roberts, who at this point was a cement mason, made his way north—north to Alaska, north to the future.

He worked all across the State helping rebuild it: Fairbanks, Kenai, Valdez, the Aleutian Islands Chain. He literally helped lay pavement for the construction of what is now Ted Stevens International Airport in Anchorage.

He bought a house in Chugiak, AK, outside of Anchorage. He met and married the love of his life, Joan, in 1970, in Anchorage. They joined the Eagle River Missionary Baptist Church, where they remained, and he remains an active member at the tender age of 100. Together for more than 40 years, before Joan passed, they raised four generations of children and had a wonderful life together.

Like I said, Tuesday, Valentine’s Day, February 14, was Mr. Roberts’ 100th birthday. I had the honor of calling him, wishing him a happy birthday, talking to him a little bit about his heroic service, thanking him for his heroic service.

The day after his birthday, he caught up with his friend Darrell Little. Mr. Roberts and Mr. Little have been friends—best friends—for more than 40 years. Darrell was visiting Mr. Roberts, making him his favorite meal for his birthday, a beef tongue sandwich. Sounds pretty good.

Darrell described Mr. Roberts as a loyal citizen who served his country bravely with honor and distinction. That is what being Alaskan of the Week is all about.

Darrell asked Mr. Roberts what he wanted to say about his extraordinary life, and here is what Mr. Roberts said just 2 days ago. He loves Alaska. He wouldn’t trade his time in the State for anything else in the world, even with all the snow we are having this winter. He also said it was such a great honor to serve his country, and he thanked God for blessing him.

He sounds like an amazing guy. He is an amazing guy. I just spoke to him.

Mr. Roberts, thank you for your service. Thank you for helping rebuild Alaska. Thank you for living and leading such an exemplary life for 100 years. Thank you, as we move into Black History Month, for showing an example of a young man, patriotic, despite systemic discrimination against him, who fought the evil Nazi regime heroically and valiantly, part of the “greatest generation” that literally saved the world.

So, Mr. Roberts, happy birthday. I know you are also happy about one of the most prestigious awards you can ever get, Alaskan of the Week. We wish you well, sir.

WILLOW PROJECT

Mr. President, you have seen this speech a couple times, and I am going to keep talking about it. Senator MURKOWSKI is going to keep talking about it. Congresswoman PELTOLA, over on the House side, is going to keep talking about it.

This is the bipartisan priority we have for Alaska and America. It is called the Willow Project. The Willow Project. People across Alaska are speaking, unified in one voice, about the importance of this very big, very environmentally safe energy project in our State. Republicans, Democrats, and Independents in our State legislature, I believe, are getting ready to pass a resolution to the Biden White House and the Biden Department of the Interior, saying: Finally, make this happen.

What is this? It is a very large project, a \$9 billion investment, with 2,500 construction jobs, 75 percent of which will be the building trades, unions; peak production of 200,000 barrels a day into the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, not much infrastructure needed; highest environmental standards in the world and lowest greenhouse gas emissions of any major project this size. It has enormous support from unions, building trades, Alaska Natives.

I have been on the floor talking about this a lot. Last week, we were frustrated. I made the point that our friends in the national media never talk about who actually really supports the project. They quote lower-48 radical environmental groups—who don’t live in Alaska, by the way—who are all opposed, we know that. They don’t want anything built in America. Heck, you can’t build a bridge here without groups like this opposing it.

But what I said is listen to the Native people, listen to the indigenous people of Alaska. They want this. I

have gone through all these groups. Every major Alaska Native group, every major union, and every major economic group in our State and across the country supports it.

So I do want to thank some of the reporters who joined me and Senator MURKOWSKI and so many of our Alaska Native leaders in a press conference a couple of days ago, and guess what. They did start reporting on the broader support in the indigenous community in my State because prior to that they were canceling the indigenous voices. The Native people—the vast majority want this project.

I want to spend a few minutes on process. The process for this project is what we are in right now. All big projects on Federal lands go through this. It is what you get when you have the Federal Agencies review a project. It is called an environmental impact statement, an EIS. After the EIS is issued, there is something called a RECORD of Decision, usually 30 days after that. So when that process goes smoothly, you get permission to start working on it. We are in the final throes of that process.

Now, it sounds a little bit boring, but what I want to do is explain what has happened because it is really important to know. This project has been reviewed by different administrations, starting with the Obama administration, then the Trump administration, and now the Biden administration. And every single time the career scientists in our Federal Agencies, the career professionals in the Department of the Interior, the Corps of Engineers, and the EPA—every time they have done this study on the environmental impacts to review this project, they have passed it with flying colors. That has happened here with the Willow Project.

Let me just give you a little bit of background. First of all, this is in the area of Alaska called the National Petroleum Reserve of Alaska.

It was set aside by Congress over 70 years ago. For what? Think about it. It is the National Petroleum Reserve of Alaska. It was for oil and gas development. It used to be called the Naval Petroleum Reserve of Alaska. So it is not controversial. It is not like ANWR or other places in Alaska. This is set aside. It makes sense, as this is where our oil is, and our country needs oil.

The leases in this area were first acquired, believe it or not, during the Clinton administration. In 1999, the company ConocoPhillips all in paid a total of about \$120 million with rental requirements. So the company is paying the Feds. That is a contract. The Feds say: We will take your money, and we are going to help you develop it.

That is the deal. A lot of people forget that. That is the deal, all right?

So preliminary work went in. The producer filed for Federal permits to produce in 2018 and received final approval. This was after many years of exploration. It then went into the envi-

ronmental impact statement process and reached a RECORD of Decision at the end of the Trump administration. OK. That sounds good. Those were the professional scientists who said: You can do this in an environmentally sensitive way.

Unfortunately, all things get litigated in the great State of Alaska. The Department of the Interior, after some litigation, said: Well, we are going to do another environmental analysis.

So the Biden administration did another environmental analysis—2 more years—and we finally got the final environmental impact statement 2 weeks ago. There are over 500 additional pages.

Here is what this environmental impact statement from the professional staff of the Biden administration said, which was similar to what the Trump administration's professional staff said: After the environmental analysis, the Biden administration's EIS found that this project would not have a detrimental impact on climate, wildlife, people, places, things.

Like I said before, it passed the environmental review.

Here is a quote on the impact on climate: "In the absence of production from [Willow], energy produced from the Project's oil would be replaced by other [places]," like Venezuela, where they are much dirtier in terms of their processes and greenhouse gas emissions. The environmental impact statement even acknowledges this. These are the career scientists from our Federal Government who wrote this EIS. They are not political appointees; they are career.

So, 2 weeks ago, that is what you would think, that we are going to get approval. Not so fast. There are 30 days left—30 days left—and guess what. Every radical environmental group in America is coming out, knocking on the door of Joe Biden's White House and knocking on the door of John Podesta's office, saying: Stop this. We don't care about the science. Just kill it.

Wait. I thought the Democratic Party was the party of science. The science is in. The project is good to go.

You can tell we are worried. Senator MURKOWSKI and I are giving a lot of speeches on this. If they kill this, it won't be based on science; it will be based on raw political power. Let me repeat that. If the Biden administration in the next 30 days decides to kill this project, it won't be based on science, because their scientists have already spoken. Their scientists have said: Good to go.

By the way, the Trump administration's scientists said: Good to go. By the way, we know they are the same scientists, right? They are career Federal employees. They are doing a good job of it.

So everybody is saying it is good to go. If it gets killed, we are watching. The enviros are knocking on the door. They are the only group, by the way, in

the whole country who doesn't think we need an additional 200,000 barrels a day for America and 2,500 jobs.

So keep a close eye on this, America. If the Biden administration kills it, it will be the result of radical environmental muscle going to the White House and saying: Kill it. Let's not let that happen.

If you are watching and if you care about American energy security, write blm.gov. Tell them to approve the Willow Project.

Come on. Don't politicize this. You guys are supposed to be the party of science. That is what you say. Well, the science is in. Prove it.

I want to make one final point here. You know, it might concern some people, but I am going to make it anyway. The Department approved this, and then the Department of the Interior, without any, really, acknowledgment of who said it, said that the Department still has substantial concerns about the Willow Project, including direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions—I am not sure what that even means—and impacts to the wildlife and Alaska Native subsistence.

Hmm. Now, that is not what the career scientists said. Go read the EIS. Why would the Department of the Interior put that out—Deb Haaland of the Department of the Interior? Why would they put that out? They know that their scientists said this was good to go. What are they trying to do here? Well, some of us are nervous that they are trying to set up the killing of the project.

But do you know what is really frustrating? I mentioned this before. They mentioned that they are worried about Native subsistence. Last week, we had all of the leaders and the biggest experts in Alaska here who live on the North Slope, who know about Native subsistence rights and hunting better than any group in the world—better than any group in the world.

What is really maddening is, if the Secretary of the Interior wants to know about Native subsistence rights, which her Department says she does, why wouldn't she meet with these great Alaskans? As a matter of fact, five different times, this group has flown from the top of the world—Barrow, AK, and Utqiagvik, AK—to come and meet with her, and she won't meet with them—five different times, dozens of my constituents. They are the experts in the world on Native subsistence, but she won't meet with them. Well, that is because they support the project, and they are experts on the issues that Interior is raising. So I find that interesting, and I find that disappointing.

Let me just make one other comment. Do you know what? Some of my colleagues say, "Hey, don't say this, Dan. You know, you are going to rile up the Secretary," but I am going to say it anyway.

Here is something else that is frustrating, in my view, even scandalous—

even scandalous. Our media won't ever report on this, but I am going to try again.

The Secretary of the Interior is from New Mexico. OK. That is interesting. Guess which State—my State can't get barely a lease. We beg. We make speeches. We fly dozens of people into DC to get leases on the Federal lands in my State to move forward. Guess which State has gotten, in the first 2 years of the Biden administration, more than half of all Federal permits to drill on Federal lands? Do you think it is Alaska? No. Is it Texas? My friend from Texas is here. It is not Texas. It is not North Dakota. It is not any of those places. Guess which it is. Oh, my goodness. It is New Mexico—New Mexico. Isn't that an interesting story for somebody? The Secretary of the Interior is from New Mexico. The senior Senator from New Mexico is from New Mexico, obviously, and they are getting all of the leases. They are getting all of the leases.

Here is the thing. New Mexico is on a tear in terms of producing oil. Now, look, I have nothing against that. The country needs it. The country needs it. But look at these numbers. These are millions of barrels. Red is New Mexico. Gray is Alaska. We are kind of steady. We need more oil. New Mexico is in red. Look at that. Holy cow. It is through the roof—through the roof. And guess what is coming with all of that production. Greenhouse gas emissions through the roof in New Mexico. Where is the reporting on that topic?

You know, sometimes the media likes to talk about “climate bombs” in the country. I don't really like the phrase. I think it is silly. But if there is a climate bomb from the production of oil in America, it is right there. It is right there.

Again, I think it is fine that this State is doing well. It is good for the country, and it is good for the workers in New Mexico. But what I don't like is the rank hypocrisy. The media is always focusing on Alaska, on our production. Yet look at this: There were 9,366 applications for permits to drill, which were approved during the first 2 years of the Biden administration, in New Mexico. Yes, that is right—over 9,000—while my State can barely get 1. And 52 percent of all permits to drill in the country are in New Mexico.

The Secretary is from New Mexico. Where is that story? Where is that story? The Secretary of the Interior has been shutting down Alaska energy production while approving massive drilling activity in her own State, and the media won't touch that story with a 10,000-foot pole.

New Mexico has increased production by 700,000 barrels a day since 2019. They are at 1.7 million barrels a day. My State is at about 500,000, and we are trying to increase. Where is that story?

You know, the senior Senator from New Mexico is always trying to shut down any oil development in Alaska. I have talked about it on the floor. I am

not going to go into it a lot here, but he has gone to extreme measures, like writing banks and insurance companies and saying: Don't invest in Alaska. But it is “drill, baby, drill” in New Mexico. No one writes that story, and I think it is hypocritical, too, because the greenhouse gas emissions in that State are going through the roof.

So there is a lot of hypocrisy going on. In my State, my constituents—the Native people, the working people—just want the most environmentally sensitive project in the world, which is the Willow Project, to keep our economy going and to help our country. That is all we want.

I think, given what the Secretary of the Interior is doing for her own State—like I said, “drill, baby, drill,” with a climate bomb in New Mexico—it is time to finalize the Willow Project according to the scientists and the final EIS that was granted by the Biden administration 2 weeks ago and not use political muscle and political power to kill a project in my State when this blue State is drilling like crazy and producing like crazy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Texas.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, in January, monthly border crossings dropped below 200,000 for the first time since last March. Last month, U.S. Customs and Border Protection logged more than 156,000 illegal border crossings. This was the busiest January in more than two decades. Yet, somehow, the Biden administration is trying to claim victory for this temporary dip in illegal border crossings. If you ask me, the President is popping the cork a little early.

For starters, these numbers are artificially reduced thanks to the administration's new parole program. Now, “parole” is not a commonly used word, but what the parole does in this context is it allows up to 30,000 people from specific countries per month into the United States. Basically, they are waved on through. If migrants enter the country on a legal basis, which is exactly what this program creates, they will never be tallied as part of the illegal migration statistics. So how better to make something illegal legal than to simply wave your magic wand and create a new category by which migrants are admitted to the United States?

In short, this new policy has allowed the administration to roll out the welcome mat for tens of thousands of migrants while pretending that the humanitarian and public safety crisis at the border is abating. It is not. It is not abating.

Second, January is a historically slow month for migration. During the previous administration, Customs and Border Protection logged an average of about 43,000 illegal border crossings each January. As a reminder, last month, we encountered 156,000—43,000

during the previous administration; this administration, 156,000 in January.

Now, as we head into spring, those numbers are sure to climb again. Warming temperatures and seasonal work always leads to increased migration, and I don't expect this year to be an exception. The numbers may have dropped temporarily last month, but there is no reason for the President to spike the football or to claim victory.

Every single day, thousands of migrants cross the United States-Mexico border. The overwhelming majority arrive here with only what they can carry on their backs. When they reach the United States, they need food, shelter, clothing, medical care, transportation, and the like.

Since President Biden took office, the pace of illegal border crossings has made this already-tough job of caring for migrants increasingly more challenging just by the sheer volume of humanity coming across the border. So law enforcement, nonprofits, and folks in my State who live and work on the border have begged the Biden administration to take action. It is not even fair to say that they were met with a shrug. Rather, they were just ignored.

In order to ease the burden on border communities in Texas, Governor Greg Abbott began transporting migrants to other States and cities last year. If the Biden administration is going to give them a piece of paper and say, “Show up for an immigration court hearing at some indefinite date in the future”—perhaps years in the future—then Governor Abbott's theory was that, rather than have them wait there in the border communities, give them a bus ticket and let them go to the place where they have told the U.S. Government they intended to relocate pending their court hearing.

But the moment the challenges spread from these small border towns in Texas to liberal enclaves in the Northeast, the outrage machine fired up big time. President Biden didn't care about the border crisis when it affected the Rio Grande Valley or Laredo or Del Rio or El Paso, but the moment it reached Manhattan and Martha's Vineyard or Chicago or Washington, DC, it was somehow a crisis.

And, of course, we know who the President blamed. He blamed Republicans. Forget the fact that nonprofits have a longstanding practice of using Federal funds to transport migrants all over the country to await their future court hearing. But once the State of Texas or the State of Arizona or the State of Florida began offering transportation to these same migrants, the President and our Democratic colleagues had an absolute meltdown.

Our colleague from Illinois, Senator DURBIN, called the practice “cruel and inhumane.” The White House Press Secretary said it was “shameful” and “reckless.” Vice President KAMALA HARRIS went so far as to call this “the height of irresponsibility” and “a dereliction of duty.”